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44

THOUGHTS
ON
MARRIAGE
AND A
SINGLE LIFE.

By JOHN WESLEY, M. A.

FELLOW of Lincoln College, OXON.

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THOUGHTS

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MARRIAGE, &c.

1.  Have been frequently asked, Which is to be preferred, A Married State, or a Single Life? A Question touching which many have run into Extremes, both on one Side and on the other. Nor have I ever seen any Treatise wrote upon it, which was Just, and agreeable to Holy Writ: And at the same time Short and so Plain that every Reader of a common Capacity might understand it.

2. This has induced me to offer to those and those only, who study to have a Conscience void of Offence, what I find in Scripture on this Head; and that in as brief and plain a Manner as I can. And I do it the rather, if haply I may cut off Occasion from them that seek Occasion against me, and who have so shamefully misrepresented what

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I have spoken on This, as indeed on all other Subjects.

3. And First, it is clear from Holy Writ, That no Man ought to *forbid* Marriage. Whosoever they are that do this, they *give heed to seducing Spirits and Doctrines of Devils* (1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.) *Have they not read, that he which made them, at the beginning made them Male and Female? And said (even while they remain'd in Paradise) For this cause shall a Man leave Father and Mother and shall cleave to his Wife?* Therefore let no Man *forbid* what GOD hath *ordain'd*, lest he be *found even to fight against GOD*.

4. Nor yet may any one *despise* Marriage. For this also is *Fighting against GOD*; who hath declared, *Marriage is honourable in all*, in all Orders and Degrees of Men. (*Heb. xiii. 4.*) To undervalue therefore what GOD has pronounced *Honourable*, to think (much more to speak) lightly of it, is an high Affront to the Majesty of GOD, a bold Impeachment both of his Wisdom and Truth.

5. And as *Marriage is Honourable*, so, GOD himself being the Wit-

ness, *the Bed is Undeiled*. Absolutely groundless therefore is the fond Conceit of those, who being *wise* far *above what is written*, affirm, " That " *Adam* fell before *Eve* was created; " that her Creation was the Consequence of his Fall; and that he " who before was neither Male nor " Female, had then (to use their own " unseemly Phrase) *this Worms Carcase hung upon him.*" To relate this Madman's *Dream* is sufficiently to confute it: The whole proceeding on that utterly false Supposition, That there is some *Inherent Turpitude*, some *Moral Defilement* in what GOD himself hath declared to be *Undeiled*.

6. If any Doubt of this kind should remain in those who are actually engaged in the Marriage State, St. Paul strikes at the very Foundation of it, in those plain, decisive Words, *Defraud you not one the other, except it be with Consent, for a time.* (1 Cor. vii. 5.) The Reason whereof he had given before: *The Wife hath not Power of her own Body but the Husband; and likewise also the Husband hath not Power*

Power of his own Body, but the Wife.
 (v. 4.) Beware therefore, that under Pretence of greater Purity, or of Inward, Particular Revelations, supposed to be of GOD, Thou disobey not an Undeniable Command of GOD, given in the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST.

7. Neither may Man *put asunder* whom GOD hath joined, on any Pretence whatsoever. We have a standing Direction in this Case also (*Matt. xix. 3, &c.*) That *it is not lawful for a Man to put away his Wife* (nor consequently, a Wife her Husband) *except only for the Cause of Adultery.* However unholy she may be in other Respects, it alters not the Case. The Command of GOD is, *Let not the Wife depart from the Husband; and, Let not the Husband put away his Wife.* (*1 Cor. vii. 10, &c.*) And again, *If any Brother* (that is, Believer) *hath a Wife that believeth not,* (if he hath her now; otherwise, Let him not take her; Let him not on any Terms be unequally yoked with an Unbeliever) *and she be pleas'd to dwell with him, let him not put her away.* And the

Woman which hath an Husband that believeth not, if he be pleas'd to dwell with her, let her not leave him. All that can be allow'd on either Hand is this, If the Unbeliever will depart let him depart, v. 11, 12, 13. 15.

8. Thus are the Common Questions relating to a Marriage State, decided by the Oracles of G O D. And all this is perfectly consistent with those Words of our Blessed Lord, (when his Disciples said unto him, if the Case of the Man with his Wife be so, it is not good to marry;) All Men cannot receive this Saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some Eunuchs which were so born, from their Mother's Womb; and there are some, which were made Eunuchs of Men: And there be Eunuchs which have made themselves Eunuchs (have abstain'd from Marriage all their Lives, have remain'd Single 'till Death) for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it, Matt. xix. 10, &c.

9. Indeed the *Romish* Writers in general affirm of This, " That it is a
Counsel,

Counsel not a *Command*." But their whole Doctrine of "Evangelical Counsels, contradistinguish'd from Divine Commands," is plainly designed to make Way for a still worse Doctrine, That of Works of Supererogation, "It is our *Duty* (say they) to keep the *Commands* of GOD; To keep the *Counsels* is *Supererogation*." But we allow of no such Distinction as this; because we find it not in Holy Writ. It has no Place in Scripture. And least of all, here. For the Word is Peremptory. *χωρεῖτω*. *Let him receive it*. (Not, He *may* receive it, if he *will*.) How could a Command be more clearly exprest?

10. But an essential Difference between this and many other Commands of GOD (and perhaps the same may be remark'd concerning all those which they term *Evangelical Counsels*) is, That it is not a *General* Command to *All* but a *Particular* one, to a *Particular Class* of Men. And who these are, is specified in the Text. They are (the *οἱ δυνάμενοι χωρεῖν*) Those who are able to receive it: Those to whom it is given; those

those who have received *this Gift of GOD.*

11. *All Men* (as our Lord had observ'd before) *cannot receive this Saying: But they, and they only, to whom it is given, by the Giver of every Good and Perfect Gift: And an unexceptionable Paraphrase on this Saying of his Lord, we have in St. Paul's Words to the Corinthians. It is good for a Man not to touch a Woman. Nevertheless, to avoid Fornication, let every Man have his own Wife, and let every Woman have her own Husband. (1 Cor. vii. 1, 2.) I would that all Men were even as I myself. But every Man hath his proper Gift of GOD. (v. 7.) I say therefore to the unmarried and Widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn, v. 8, 9.*

12. Hence it plainly appears, That *they who were able to receive this Saying, are they to whom Continence is given; they who having this Gift of GOD, can avoid Fornication, tho' they abide even as the Apostle. They are*
able

able to receive it, who neither marry nor burn; who can keep themselves pure in a single Life: Who know, even in this State, how to possess their Vessel in Sanctification and Honour, without any Uncleaness, either in Act or Desire; being undefiled both in Body and Spirit.

13. “ But who are able to keep themselves thus pure?” I answer, Every Believer in CHRIST: Every one who hath living Faith *in the Name of the only begotten Son of GOD.* And herein we speak the Things which we know, and can prove by a Cloud of Witnesses. Whoever finds *Redemption in his Blood*, in that Hour receives this Gift of GOD. Lust then vanishes away: And if they that are *born of GOD*, keep themselves, shall never return. So long *that Wicked one toucheth them not.* He may tempt; but he cannot prevail. But if the Believer keep not himself, if he do not watch unto Prayer, if he do not look unto JESUS Day and Night, he will soon be weak again, and like another Man. He hath cast away the Gift of GOD. Then, *to avoid Fornication, let him marry*

marry (unless he have Confidence that he shall soon recover it) for it is better to marry than to burn.

14. *So then he that marrieth (in this Case) doth well. But he that, having no Necessity, marrieth not, doth better: The Ground and Reason of which the Apostle lays down at large in the Words that follow. I wou'd have you without Carefulness (You that are able to receive this Saying.) Now he that is unmarried, careth for the Things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But he that is married, careth for the Things that are of the World, how he may please his Wife. There is Difference also between a Wife and a Virgin. The unmarried Woman careth for the Things of the Lord, that she may be Holy both in Body and in Spirit. But she that is married careth for the Things of the World, how she may please her Husband. And this I speak for your Profit—that you may attend upon the Lord without Distraction, v. 32, 35.*

15. *Art thou called then, being bound? Dost Thou hear the Voice of GOD, being already in a married State?*

Fear

Fear not, GOD will support thee therein. But if thou mayst be free, use it rather. If Thou art bound unto a Wife, seek not to be loosed. But if Thou art loosed from a Wife, seek not a Wife. Thou art called to endure Hardship as a good Soldier of JESUS CHRIST. Now no Man that warreth (as the Apostle elsewhere observes) 2 Tim. ii. 4. intangleth himself with the Affairs of this Life: No wise Man; but rather layeth aside every Weight, that he may run with Patience the Race set before him; that he may have only one Thing to care for, To please Him who hath chosen him to be a Soldier; to fight the Good Fight of Faith, and lay hold on Eternal Life!

16. Whosoever therefore thou art, who canst say, *The Life I now live, I live by Faith in the Son of GOD; Being justified freely I have Peace with GOD, thro' my Lord JESUS CHRIST; I have Redemption in his Blood, the Remission of my Sins*: Know the Liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made Thee free, and stand Thou fast therein. Beware Thou be not intangled again, in foolish and hurtful Lusts. Thou art
now

now able to receive this Saying. Be Thou therefore sober, and watch unto Prayer. Be not highminded but fear. Keep thy Heart with all Diligence, that thou lose not the Gift of GOD. Blessed art Thou, if Thou continuest as *an Eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake*. Thou mayst well rejoice, seeing it is given to Thee, *to be without Carefulness*. Be exceeding glad; for Thou art able to *attend upon the Lord without Distraction*. And see Thou cast not away, neither sell at any Price, the Privilege which GOD hath given Thee. *Care Thou only for the Things of the Lord, how Thou mayst be Holy both in Body and in Spirit*. Let thine Eye be always unto Him who hath declared, *Verily, verily I say unto You, there is no Man who hath left Father or Mother, or Wife or Children, — for my Name's Sake, but he shall receive an Hundred Fold, now in this present Time, and in the World to come, Eternal Life.*

F I N I S.

